

April 14, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Vice Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chairman Harkin, and Ranking Member Moran:

On behalf of America's community college leadership, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) request your continued support for essential programs that create higher education opportunity and prepare the nation's workforce. AACC and ACCT represent the nation's more than 1,100 community college presidents and their trustees.

While the economy continues to recover, employment remains a pressing issue as far too many Americans remain un- or underemployed. Business leaders repeatedly state that part of this problem is the difficulty they have finding workers with the requisite education and skills to fill available jobs. Students of all ages are seeking to enhance their skills and career readiness, and we must make the needed investments to help them and many more complete their educational goals. With more than 13 million students enrolling annually in community colleges, federal investments in student aid and institutional support are making a critical difference.

In determining 302(b) levels for fiscal year (FY) 2015, we ask for your consideration in providing an allocation for the Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) subcommittee that is sufficient to make critical investments in education and workforce training. In FY 2014 we saw the increasing cost of "must pay" programs erode discretionary funding available for other programs in the LHHS allocation. As a result, many programs did not see full sequestration relief in FY 2014, and almost every program remains below FY 2010 levels. We urge you to restore the FY 2015 LHHS 302(b) allocation to the FY 2010 level of \$163.6 billion.

Additionally, AACC and ACCT urge you to consider the following programmatic priorities for FY 2015:

**The Federal Pell Grant Program**

Pell Grants are essential to helping low-income students access and complete higher education. Each year nearly 9 million students -- 3.3 million community college students -- rely on the program to help pay for tuition, books, fees, transportation, and living expenses. Congress should maintain discretionary funding levels for this program, which combined with mandatory funding will produce a projected maximum award of \$5,830 in award year 2015-16. Additionally, we ask that Congress maintain current eligibility standards for both traditional and nontraditional students, while finding a way to restore eligibility for ability-to-benefit students.

### **Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs**

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act programs are the largest ongoing source of federal institutional support for community colleges, helping them to improve all aspects of cutting-edge CTE programs. The Perkins Basic State Grants give postsecondary institutions the flexibility to identify local priorities and to fund innovation in occupational education programs. Community colleges use these grants to improve programs that prepare students for high-skill, in-demand fields by helping them meet challenging academic, vocational, and technical standards; improve curricula; purchase the equipment students need to know how to use in today's jobs; integrate vocational and academic instruction; and foster better links between colleges and the business community. We urge Congress to restore this program to at least its FY 2012 level.

### **Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants**

AACC and ACCT remain very concerned about the unrestored sequester cuts to the Adult Basic and Literacy Education State Grants (ABE) program. ABE grants help serve 1.8 million participants each year in gaining reading, numeracy and English literacy, and GED preparation. Demand for these programs, however, far outstrips supply, as tens of thousands of individuals remain on waitlists for services. A recent report from OECD on a survey of adult skills showed that 36 million Americans, or one in six adults, lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. We cannot hope to raise our workforce's educational attainment to the levels demanded by the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy without adequately addressing the needs of this population. We ask that Congress reinstate funding for ABE to pre-sequestration levels.

### **Strengthen Workforce Development**

The Workforce Investment Act's (WIA) job training programs provide workers, particularly those with minimal means or skills, with the education and training they need in the changing economy. Continued funding for WIA is a priority for community colleges in order to maintain access and build programs for training workers. AACC and ACCT remain greatly concerned about the reduction in funding for WIA over the past several appropriations cycles. In fact, since FY 2010, WIA state grants have seen a near 13% reduction. We encourage Congress to begin to reverse this slide in FY 2015 by restoring the program to at least pre-sequestration levels.

### **Other Important Funding Priorities**

Community colleges strongly support Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Work Study, the Strengthening Institutions program (Title III-A of the Higher Education Act), Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, international education, and the TRIO and GEAR UP programs. Cuts to these programs could have a devastating impact on student access and success. Hence we ask for a minimum of flat funding for these programs. Additionally, we remain concerned about sustained cuts to the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program, and request consideration for restored funding.

These investments in our education and workforce system are vital to our nation's economic prosperity and thus also vital to the health of the federal budget over time. We urge you to keep those considerations in mind when allocating resources in FY 2015.

Sincerely,



Walter G. Bumphus  
AACC President and CEO



J. Noah Brown  
ACCT President and CEO